



## Pick Your Path to Health

### Are You Physically Active?

It's time to get moving. Whether you're an Asian American woman who works full-time outside the home or one who works full-time inside the home or a little of both, there is one thing you can do to feel better. That one thing is being physically active. It can help control your weight, improve your strength and endurance, build healthy bones and muscles, reduce anxiety and stress, and perhaps even improve your blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Physical activity may sound like an unpleasant chore, but it doesn't have to be. "I feel much better after exercising regularly," says Liying Han, a Chinese graduate student at the University of Maryland. She used to sit in front of the computer reading and writing all day, but "always felt tired at study time and could not concentrate." Then she began going to the university gym with some friends. "Though the exercise was exhausting at first, later I found myself stronger, more efficient at studying, and even enjoying life better."

If you aren't getting enough physical activity, you're not alone. According to the U.S. Department of Health and

Any activity you choose is good for your health. Here are some examples:

Activity	Calories/30 Min	Activity	Calories/30 Min
Aerobics	211	Skiing	246
Bicycling, stationary at moderate effort	246	Swimming, freestyle, moderate effort	281
Cleaning	123	Stairs-treadmill	211
Dancing	158	Tennis	281
Running, 10 minute mile	352	Shoveling Snow	246
Walking, 3.0 mph, walking the dog	123	Walking, 4.0 mph, brisk pace	140

Table excerpted from Understanding Nutrition (9th Edition) by Eleanor N Whitney and Sharon R Rolfes.

Human Services, less than one-third of Asians report exercising more than

20 minutes, 3 or more times per week. More than 25 percent of Asian women do not engage in physical activity at all.

"Many women cannot find time to exercise because of work and family responsibilities," explains Lisa Wei, Coordinator at the Chinatown Information & Referral Center in Washington, D.C. "Many women work six to seven days a week and find it difficult to make the time to exercise with so many other responsibilities," she continues.

## **Finding the Time**

Life is busy. If you aren't getting the recommended 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week, there are ways to squeeze exercise minutes into your daily routine. Try this.

- Be ready for physical activity wherever you are. Keep a pair of comfortable walking or running shoes handy.
- Stuff small containers of pre-moistened towelettes in your shoes for a quick and refreshing clean-up after exercise.
- Make physical activity part of your daily commute or your daily errands by choosing to walk when appropriate.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- If your work involves sitting down for a long time, get up regularly to walk around and stretch a bit and find ways to move more when you do your chores.
- Take a walk around the block.
- Walk up and down the sidelines at your child's baseball or soccer practices.
- Join a weekend dance group such as line dancing or ballroom dancing.
- Roll up your sleeves and try gardening or washing the car.
- Take some small hand weights to work and do a few simple strength exercises before or after a break.

## **Physical Activity Benefits Women**

Regular physical activity gives women important health advantages, including lower risks for coronary heart diseases, some cancers, osteoporosis, and other causes of death and disability. Moderate exercise can also enhance your spirituality and bring more positive energy into your life. If you're already active, increasing the amount, duration, frequency, or intensity of physical activity can also help you achieve better health.

Different forms of exercise provide different results (see chart). What's important is that you choose an activity you will do and enjoy.

"Many Asian American women often choose to participate in less traditional forms of exercise, such as Tai Chi," explains Wei. Tai Chi was initially developed as a form of martial arts, but over time, it has developed into a spiritual way of practicing soft, slow movements by people of all ages. There are plenty of choices for you says Wei.

If you want more information on physical activity, please call the National Women's Health Information Center toll-free at 1-800-994-WOMAN or visit us at <http://www.4woman.gov>.

Keeping physically active is not as hard as you think. Try to stay physically active every day, and you will find yourself on a path to better health.

*Pick Your Path to Health is a national public health education campaign sponsored by the Office on Women's Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For more information about the campaign, please call 1-800-994-WOMAN or 1-888-220-5446 (TDD), or visit the National Women's Health Information Center at <http://www.4woman.gov/> To request weekly health tips by e-mail, click on the box that says, "Click Here for weekly health tips by e-mail."*